

Stranded by Fyremasen

by Words of Love for Meli

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**\*\*This story is written for, and dedicated to, Melistories.\*\***

**\*\*Dear Meli,\*\***

**\*\*We may not know you on a personal level, but we've learned of your fight. We've been in awe of you and your strength, grace and courage since we heard. We wanted you to know that we're here, thinking of you and that you are in our prayers. This is a little something we hope you'll enjoy and that it helps remind you that we care. That you're not forgotten and we're pulling for you! \*\***

**\*\*Lissa & Fyre\*\***

**\* \* \***

><p>I don't know what I was thinking making this drive instead of flying. It's hot as fuck and the sun beating down isn't helping. Thankfully, it should be setting soon. It was really stupid to leave my top down. I should've had it up and the AC blasting.<p>

I needed to get out of DC, and when this convention was mentioned, I jumped on it. I figured driving would be good. I love my car and don't get to drive her nearly enough in the city. Plus, I could use the fresh air and time to clear my head.

Being a doctor at a major hospital isn't all it's cracked up to be. I'm busy all the time, get very little recognition and never feel as though I get to spend enough time with the patients before they're shoved out the door to make room for new ones.

I've thought about getting out of the city, but I sure as fuck couldn't live in a small town like the ones I've been driving through. In my mind, all the people are one step away from the family in The Texas Chainsaw Massacre.

I really should've been paying more attention to my driving instead of getting lost in my head, because suddenly, a movement on my left surprises me. A deer jumps out and stands right in the middle of the road.

Swerving, I manage to miss the thing but end up sliding down an embankment instead. Getting out, I go around to check the damage. "Fuck," I swear. One of my tires is flat and the whole front fender is a crumpled mess.

Heading back to the driver's seat, I get in and try to see what I can do. After several minutes of various attempts, it's clear I'm stuck. I check my phone and see I have no reception.

Just fucking great.

Looks like I'm going to be walking. Luckily, I just passed through a town. Hopefully, it won't be too small or shitty to be able to help.

After making sure everything is all locked up, I start walking back the way I just came. After almost an hour, I finally see a Welcome to Forks sign. At least, now I know where the fuck I am.

The sun is setting, but I hope I can find someone who can help me out tonight. I really don't want to leave my baby on the side of the road.

The light from a diner down the road draws my attention so I start making my way there. When I enter, I head straight up to the counter. There's a tiny woman with short hair, and at first, I'm not sure she's old enough to be working until I get closer. It's then that I can see the fine lines around her eyes. She's probably in her forties, but still very pretty.

She approaches me right away. "Hey. Welcome to Alice's. Here's our menu. Can I get ya somethin' to drink?"

"Actually, I was hoping you could help me out. My car is stuck a couple miles down the highway and I was wondering if there's someone who could help me."

She turns toward the opening where a blond man is putting up plates of food. "Is Ro or B working tonight?" she yells to the guy.

He stops his work and looks like he's thinking. "Ro is. Maybe Jake too."

"Okay. Thanks, baby." She blows him a kiss and turns back to me.

"Swan's is the best mechanic shop in these parts. I can give Ro a call and see if they can get ya hooked up tonight. I doubt they're too busy other than towin' cars at the bar so the drunks can't drive. Hold on a sec." She walks over to the phone—"an actual wall phone"—and makes a call.

"You said a couple miles back? Which side?" she asks, covering the receiver.

I tell her in as much detail as I can where my car is, and while she relays the information; my eyes take in my surroundings. The booth seats are covered in cheap, cracked vinyl and the faded yellow paint is the perfect complement to the drab interior. Formica with chips from years of use cover both the bar and table tops. All in all, it's a shitty little joint, probably what I can expect from the rest of the town.

The lady hangs up the phone, drawing my attention back to her. "Ro said they'll stop by after they pick it up. While ya waitin', ya wanna eat somethin'?"

Not sure whether letting these small town people get their hands on my baby is good news or not, I try to quell the nerves her statement brings. I seriously doubt Triple-A comes this far out anyway.

The diner may look like shit but the smells wafting from the kitchen make my stomach grumble, so I nod and pick up the menu. Figuring, what the hell, I order the greasiest burger they offer. Not very fucking 'doctorly' of me, but under these circumstances, I'd say it's well deserved.

Almost an hour later, I've finished eating and have called everyone that matters to let them know what happened. It's not looking like making the convention is very likely.

Just as I hang up with my mom, a woman in overalls walks in. She's gorgeous. Blonde hair, blue eyes and even with the terrible clothes she's wearing, her body is smoking. Her face alone could rival some I've seen in movies. She makes her way over to the woman behind the counter, who, I have since learned, is Alice.

Alice points in my direction and the blonde follows her gesture and starts heading my way. She might be beautiful, but I'm sick of blondes and definitely not looking for a hookup, so I hope she isn't planning to hit on me.

"You own the red Alfa that needed to be towed?" she asks. Hmm, maybe she was impressed by my car. Sorry, lady, but I'm not interested.

"Yes, that's my car," I say, trying to keep it brisk so she'll get the message.

"Me and Jake picked it up." She throws her thumb over her shoulder toward a dark-haired man standing at the counter. "It's gonna need some serious work before you can drive her again and we don't stock parts for those so they'll need to be ordered."

"I'm sorry. What? \_You \_picked up my car?" This beauty queen picked

up my car? Oh, please don't let them have messed it up worse than it was.

She rolls her eyes. "Yeah me and Jake. I'm Ro." She pulls out a card and passes it to me. "We open at nine in the mornin'. B will come in and have a look at your car. We'll put in a call once we know exactly what we need. If you wanna drop by that address"â€"she points to the card she handed meâ€"around eleven we should be able to tell ya somethin' then."

Shocked that the blonde bombshell is the one who towed my car, I'm barely able to form a decent response. "Uh, okay, I guess. Thanks." I know that's probably all I can expect tonight, but now I'm going to need to figure out a place to stay in this shitty town.

After Ro leaves, I get up and walk back to the counter, signaling for Alice. "Would you happen to know of a place I could stay tonight?"

Alice is nice enough to drop me off at a local hotel. It's definitely nothing special and nowhere fucking near what I'm accustomed to, but it looks clean and has a bathroom and a bed. At this point, I don't really need more. I'm able to fall asleep almost as soon as my head hits the pillow.

The next morning, I set out on foot. In the light of day, the town doesn't look quite as shitty as I'd imagined. Trees line the streets in formation, alternating with flowerbeds. There's old-town charm everywhere I look and anyone I pass is nice enough to say hello.

I briefly think I could get used to this but then shake that thought from my head. I'm just burned out and needed a break. There's no way I could be happy in a town this small.

When eleven draws near, I start making my way toward Swans. Thankfully, it's not hard to find. It seems most things are located within a few blocks of downtown.

The first thing I notice when I walk into the garage is a spectacular ass sticking out of the interior of an old Mustang. Long smooth legs lead up to that ass which is encased in tight, very short, cutoff jean shorts.

I can't make out much more since her head is inside the car, but I'm pretty sure this isn't Ro. Even though, from what I could see, Ro was beautiful, this ass is out of this world. Round and plump, accented by a small waist and those goddamn thighs.

So lost am I in my perusal, that I almost miss the rest of her when she leans up from the car. My eyes travel upward, finding a tank top and skin. So much fucking skin. All shrouded in long, dark locks that hang almost to that delectable ass.

I finally remember why I'm here and clear my throat. She turns and the world slows. She's fucking gorgeous. I've seen a lot of attractive women in the city but this girl, she's unreal. A wet dream come true, pulled straight from a poster on the wall of my sixteen-year-old self.

I realize I'm staring when she cocks an eyebrow.

"Um, I'm, uh, here to speak to someone about my car. Ro picked it up last night. She told me to, uh, come by and speak to someone named B today." I can't believe I'm having trouble talking around her. Usually, it's women who get flustered around me.

Suddenly. I'm pissed. How dare this hick of a girl make me, Dr. Edward Cullen, act like an idiot. She's hot but nothing special. I bet she just cleans the cars or something.

"Listen, is your boss here? I really need to know what's going on with my car though I'm not sure I want anyone here touching it." I'm being an asshole, but that car is my baby and I choose very carefully who I even let change the oil. It's not like I need to make friends here anyway.

The woman stands there with her hand propped on her hip and a smirk on her lips. "You wanna talk to my boss? You don't think we can handle your car here?" she asks, amusement dancing in her dark eyes.

"Look, I'm sure you all are great with trucks and regular cars, but my car isn't just any old car. It can't be treated like some Ford or Chevy or something," I explain a bit pissed with her attitude.

She just continues smirking with her eyebrow cocked.

"Look, is Ro here or B? I'd like to speak with someone right away please!" I'm getting so fucking exasperated with her attitude. It doesn't help that seeing her standing there with her hand propped on those hips gives me a visual for what it'd be like to hold her there while thrusting in and out.

My cock twitches in my pants.

It's been quite some time since I've been turned on, much less by a woman I barely know. I was almost beginning to worry, but clearly Little Ed works just fine for hot, little brunettes with long legs and a sexy as fuck allure.

"You wanna talk to the person in charge?" she asks, still smirking.

Had I not made that clear?

"Yes, please. Could you go get them?" I motion for her to run along.

Instead of moving, her smirk drops and her finger starts pointing. "Look, City, you wanted to talk to the person in charge of this place, well you've been talkin' to her. Now, what can I do for ya?"

No fucking way. This girl's in charge? She has to be fucking with me. She looks like she's barely twenty-years-old. And while her shop attire is enticing to look at, I can't see her fixing very many cars dressed like that.

"Seriously, I don't want to play games. Please go get me whoever I need to talk to," I say sternly in an attempt to let her know I'm not

buying this bullshit she's trying to sell.

"I already told ya you're talkin' to her. Now either speak or get the fuck out. I got shit to do. Some asshole messed up his 2012 Alfa Romeo Spider and now I gotta fix it. Seems he wants it done right, because that beauty only deserves to have the best touchin' her." She turns to walk away from me and I realize I've fucked up.

This is the person in charge of my baby. This fine specimen of a woman is really who I'm going to have to depend on to get her fixed. I decide to turn on the charm to try smooth things over.

"Wait," I call, giving her my best smile—the panty dropper, according to some women. "I'm really sorry. We started out on the wrong foot. I'm Dr. Edward Cullen. I just didn't expect the person in charge to be so beautiful."

She laughs. She fucking laughs at me. "Listen, City, don't try your charm on me. I grew up with the boys 'round here. They ooze charm. Their daddies have been teachin' 'em since they were babies. You got nothin' on them."

Shocked and more than a little impressed she called me out, I ask, "Does their charm work on you?"

She actually smiles a genuine smile. "Nah. Their daddies teach 'em to turn on the charm. My daddy taught me to call 'em on their bullshit and hit 'em where it hurts."

Again, her bluntness shocks me, and I throw my head back and laugh.

"Now, let's start over." She wipes her hand on a rag she had in her pocket and holds it out for me to take. "Nice to meet you, Dr. Cullen. I'm Bella Swan and I run this place. Let's talk about your car. You're a lucky man. She's a real beauty — Or she is when the front isn't smashed to hell."

I reach out to her and when skin meets skin, a current starts at my fingers and zings up my arm. I immediately pull back and stare at my hand, not sure what the fuck that was or if I even want to know.

Clearing her throat, she manages to get my attention and with a wave of her hand—that electric shock-worthy hand—I fall in line behind her on the way out to see my baby. After talking with her about the repairs, I realize just how lucky I am to have crashed near this small town. She's pure sin, but she also knows everything there is to know about a car.

She informs me that the parts may take a couple weeks to get, but if I want it done right, the wait will be well worth it. I have plenty of time built up at the hospital so that shouldn't be an issue, and besides, I had already taken this week off for the conference that isn't happening.

I leave her shop fucking ecstatic over everything we discussed and still a little bit turned on. Nothing a long, cold shower won't fix.

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A few days later and I'm really starting to like this town. The people are warm and welcoming and it's nice that everyone I meet doesn't know anything about me. I can almost imagine myself driving these streets with the top down on a regular basis.

But as usual, thinking of my car makes me think of Bella. We speak every day. Well speak might be an exaggeration. While we had one nice conversation the day we met, it seems that typically we bring out the worst in each other and end up arguing. She's very smart and not at all what I expected from a small town, Southern girl. However, she's also a bitch, direct and to the point, and well, we get along like oil and water.

That's why usually I deal with Ro, who I have come to know is actually Rosalie. I've asked her what crawled up Bella's ass, but she just told me Bella has her reasons for being the way she is. I think she was born a bitch. After all, how much stuff can a girl as young as she is have been through?

To be honest, I'm sick of thinking about her constantly. I've considered that maybe I just need to fuck her and get it out of my system. I'm sure it's just the fact that she's the first woman to make my cock swell with just an innocent look, but fuck that. I don't need some sexy bitch screwing with my head.

Today when I entered Swan's, just like the first time, all I see are legs. Long, fucking, creamy goddamn legs and they're sticking out from under my fucking car. I instantly know it's Bella. Tearing my eyes away, I look around the shop praying someone else is around. They're not. My cock says that's a good thing, but my mind tells me to run.

Taking a minute more to enjoy the vision before I have to hear her talk, I stand and watch as her feet tap out a beat to whatever music she's hearing. After catching myself involuntarily licking my fucking lips, I gently nudge the foot closest to me to get her attention.

She jerks and I hear a little bump that sounds like her head hitting something. After a barrage of cursing, she rolls the Creeper out from under the car. Earbuds fill her ears and a bump is red and swelling on her forehead.

"What the fuck are you doin'? Are you tryin' to kill me?" She lashes out at me.

I step back and hold my hands up in defense. "Sorry. I was just trying to get your attention to see how things were going."

"They're goin good. The same as they were last night, Dr. Cullen." She rubs her head.

"Here let me check that bump." I move over and place my fingers on her head. No shock this time, but a slight hum still radiates from where we touch. "I'm sorry if I'm being a pain in the ass. It's just that I really love this car. It was the first thing I ever really

bought for myself. My dad and I used to put model cars together when I was younger, and we built a classic Alfa Romeo. I fell in love with them then, and I swore, one day I would own one. A modern one seemed more my style, though."

Moving my fingers softly over her head, I see a nice bump but no real damage. My eyes slide down to her rich brown ones and before I can stop myself, I'm leaning down to " I don't know. Fucking kiss her?

Whatever I was doing doesn't matter because she pulls away before I can even finish my thought process.

"Sorry. I got carried away," I apologize. I'm hurt and more than a little surprised she pulled away even though she's never given me any signal that it was okay to try that bullshit.

"Look, City, it's nothin' personal. A year ago, I might've been fine with fuckin' ya and then you leavin', but I can't do that anymore. I'm no whore ready to fall for some hotshot who just happened to end up in my town cause some bad luck," she brushes me off.

"I didn't even ask you to have sex. I was just going to kiss you. You're full of yourself." I'm kind of pissed to hear her say all this. I know women, and I know she's turned on by me; it's in her eyes even now, as she tries to avoid my stare.

She huffs. "Please. You'd bend me over right here if I'd let'cha."

"The hell I would. You're beautiful, but your personality fucking sucks," I retort even though I can't be sure what she's saying isn't true.

"So if I were to just take these off right here"â€"she starts unbuttoning her shortsâ€"and bend over the hood of your hot as fuck car, you wouldn't do anything?"

Her shorts are unbuttoned but still on as she leans over my car.

She starts swaying her ass slowly. "So I'm such a bitch that you wouldn't fuck me? Really?" She looks over her shoulder at me and licks her lips. That's it. My self-control is gone.

I rush over and press my chest against her back. "I think you're almost begging me to fuck you, Swan. You want it bad don't you?"

She halfheartedly pushes back against me. "I wouldn't fuck a city boy like you if you were the last man around."

"Oh really?" I slide my hand down to her unbuttoned shorts and run just the tips of my fingers inside. "So you don't want to feel my cock inside you? You don't want me to fuck you? Tell me no and I'll back away."

I start very slowly sliding my fingers down. When I come to lace, I dip my fingers under it. "You don't want this? You want me to leave?"

Her chest is heaving. She turns her head toward me, lust brewing in



her dark eyes. "Screw it! Fuck me so I can get ya outta my system and outta my town." Her words vaguely pierce the lust filling my head enough to realize she's likely been thinking of me just as much as I've been consumed by her.

She reaches her hand back and fists my hair to pull my lips to hers. At the same time, I slide my fingers lower, finally making contact with her heat. She's so hot and so fucking wet. My fingers slip through her lips easily, coating themselves in her moisture.

I find her clit and flick it several times before dipping my fingers down and sliding two inside. Damn, she's tight. So fucking tight and goddamn perfect.

With my other hand, I go under her shirt and push her bra out of the way. Her tits are a little more than a handful and her nipples are rock hard just like my cock.

We're still kissing when she suddenly bites down on my lip and pulls away. "I said, \_fuck me\_."

She releases my hair to reach down and unzip, pushing her shorts to the floor. Then she reaches back and palms me over my pants.

I quickly unbutton and unzip, letting my pants fall around my ankles.

Bella starts to turn around, but I stop her. "Uh, uh. Bend back over. You wanted me to fuck you. I'm going to fuck you." I put my hand on her back and push her over the hood of my car. Then I smack her ass and soothe the sting because it's so perfect I need to touch it.

She jerks her head around and gives me a look. Her expression says she's pissed, but the excitement brewing in her eyes betrays her. She fucking likes it, so I do it one more time and raise my brow daring her to deny it. She doesn't. She fucking moans and my cock pulses from the sound.

As I fist my cock, my mind briefly thinks of \_her \_back home, but just as quickly as she enters my head, she's back out. I'm going to fuck Bella and get her out of my head for good, and nothing is going to stop me.

Pushing forward, I slide the tip of my cock through her wetness, all the way up to push on her clit with each pass. She presses back into me, begging for me to slide inside, but I tease instead. She's panting and squirming underneath me before I finally give in to what we both want.

In one, solid stroke I'm buried to where skin meets skin. My resounding groan echoes through the building and I grit my teeth to keep it together. Pulling back, I push in again. And again. And fucking again. It's an addiction. I'm already craving the feel of my cock sliding between her lips. I know immediately that this won't be getting her out of my system. If anything, I'm going to crave her more.

I move one hand to her hair and pull, lifting her torso off the car. With my other hand, I reach around, finding her tit. My fingers seek out her nipple, plucking it hard. Fuck me if her pussy doesn't clench

and the loudest moan yet comes out of her mouth. Just like I thought â€| little Bella likes it rough. I hit the fucking jackpot.

I slide my hand from her tit up to her throat, lightly squeezing. My other hand is still gripping her hair while my hips continue to thrust.

Bella meets me thrust for thrust. One of her hands moves back, grabbing my ass pulling me tighter against her. Her nails sink into my skin and I like knowing I'll have marks once we're done.

I can't hold out much longer. She feels too good. So my fingers seek out her clit. It's swollen and sensitive. As soon as I touch it, a keening noise comes from her, and with my next thrust, she's clenching down. The feel of her walls squeezing my cock triggers my own release. With a few more sloppy thrusts, I carry us both through our climax.

Spent, I drop my chest onto her, careful to keep my full weight off her. I nuzzle my face into her hair. Even though she spends her days under cars, I still detect a hint of her shampoo. Soon enough, I pull myself away. We both groan as I slip out.

I reach down to pull my pants up while she does the same with her shorts. With her back still to me, she adjusts her shirt and smooths down her hair before turning to face me.

Our eyes meet, and I know her walls are higher than ever. I'm not sure what I hoped for, but it isn't the look I see on her face â€| the cold, emotionless mask.

"Thanks for that, City. Now, if you want your car ready I need you to get outta here and lemme work." With that, she turns back to my car, grabbing a cloth I didn't even notice before and starts wiping down the spot where her body was pressed into my car.

Sighing, I turn away because it won't do any good to fight her right now. Before I go, though, I make her aware that while I may be leaving, for now, she isn't getting rid of me for long. "At some point, Bella, we're going to have to talk about what just happened."

Without looking at me, she replies, "Ain't nothing to talk about. You wanted to fuck me, I needed a release, we fucked."

Frustrated, I rake a hand through my hair. "Dammit Bella, you knowâ€|"

She cuts me off. "We should hear something about the parts we need tomorrow. Once we know exact dates, I'm sure Ro will give you a call. Now I got a lotta work to do before I can go home. Night, City."

I stare at her back and can tell by her stiff posture that's she's waiting for me to go. Finally, with one last look, I walk out, leaving her behind. I may have hoped to get her out of my system, but I can already tell that she just became more ingrained than before.

On the way back to the hotel, my phone rings. Glancing at the screen, I see it's \_her. \_I'm not surprised. She's been calling nearly

non-stop all day. I move to hit ignore, but know she won't stop so I answer, "Hello."

"Have you been avoiding me?"

I roll my eyes even though she can't see. "Why would you think that?"

I can practically hear the anger rolling through the phone. "I'm not playing these games, Edward. When are you coming home? We have things to discuss."

My mind immediately goes back to Bella and everything that happened tonight. No matter when the parts come in for my car, I still have unfinished business here. "I'm not sure. It appears that it won't be for a while."

"Why the fuck not? I've been patient, but you promised me â€¦"

I cut her off not wanting to get into any of this with her while I still smell Bella with every breath I take. "Look, I know what I promised and I'll talk it over with you when I get back, but I'm not leaving my car here."

"You and that car. The way you act about it is rather ridiculous. Hold on â€¦" I hear a voice in the background.

She comes back on the line. "Listen, I have to go right now, but we need to talk â€¦ soon. You can't put me off forever."

Wanting nothing more than to get her off the phone right now, I agree. "I know. The mechanic should have more information soon and I'll call when I know something."

"Fine." I hear the voice in the background again. "I really have to go. Talk to you soon." The phone clicks and she's ended the call.

I stare at the phone and know I should hop on a plane and head back home. I don't actually need to be here for my car to get fixed, and there's plenty of shit that needs my attention there. But even knowing what I should do, the fact that all I can really concentrate on is a small brunette with steel walls and attitude tells me exactly what I'm going to do.

Not wanting to dwell any longer on the fuckery that's my life right now, I slip my phone into my pocket and head back to my room.

It turns out that Bella is quite adept at hiding. No matter when I go to the shop, she's never there. Too bad for her, though, I'm not going anywhere anytime soon. After talking to Ro the day after Bella and I had sex, she told me that the parts for my car are going to take up to two months to get here. Apparently, they're on back order.

Also, the mayor of Forks, Billy Black, approached me later that evening. The town doctor had a small heart attack and they have no one to fill in for him. The community now has to drive into the next town, close to an hour away, to see a doctor. Knowing that I'm a doctor, they asked if I would be willing to fill in for him while I'm in town. Relishing in the fact that this gives me another reason to

stay, I immediately said yes.

Since that day, my attention has been focused on obtaining a license to practice in South Carolina. I was able to fill out the application and all my test scores were within guidelines so now I'm just waiting for the final approval.

I spend my days wandering this quaint little town, seeing it through new eyes, not the jaded ones that landed here that first night. Every single person I've met has been so terribly kind, I'm almost ashamed of my thoughts back then. Even the diner is fabulous and has the best food around; including the healthier options I tend to lean toward.

As for progress with Bella, there hasn't been any, but I stopped even fucking trying. I was persistent at first, but Edward Cullen isn't going to chase some girl â€| even if thoughts of her and the way she felt wrapped around my cock still plague me in my quiet moments. Still, I can tell when a woman is brushing me offâ€"not that it's ever happened beforeâ€"and have decided to keep my distance. If she can forget that hot as fuck sex we had, then so can I.

Well, I can pretend anyway.

When I finally receive my South Carolina State Board Certification to practice medicine, I actually feel a sense of pride. Not only am I doing this as an excuse to stick around, but I actually find myself wanting to get a taste of the small-town doctor life. Meeting new patients, seeing them more than once, and learning their names is going to be a fulfilling experience.

I go to lunch at the diner and even Alice can spot my upbeat mood. "What's got you smilin' like a loon," she asks as she places my chicken wrap in front of me.

Shaking my head, I ask, "Is it that obvious?"

"Looks like ya got laid ya smile's so wide," she says, rolling her eyes.

Of fucking course, the first thing to pop into my head is the vision of Bella spread before me on the hood of my car, but as quickly as it entered, I shake it away and hold up my hands. "Oh, no. Nothing like that," I quickly assure her. "I received my license to practice today. I'll officially be taking over for Dr. Banner on Monday morning."

Her face lights up with the news. "Well, this calls for a celebration!"

"Hold up, Alice," I say trying to calm her exuberance some. "I'm just doing what I can to help out while I'm around."

She places her hand on my shoulder and fixes me with her hazel eyes. "A drink never hurt nobody. What ya say? Drinks at The Hut 'round nine?"

I'm not one for small bars on the outskirts of small towns, but there's no way I'd turn her down with the puppy eyes on me. I chuckle. "Sure thing, Alice," I concede.

She smiles wide and dances off. I can faintly hear her informing Jasper of their new plans for tonight as I pick up my wrap and start to eat.

Hours later, I'm standing before the mirror, running my hand over my head in an attempt to tame my wild hair. My crisp, black button up is rolled to my elbows and I adjust the collar just so. I look pretty fucking hot if I do say so myself. Maybe this is exactly what I need to get out of my funk, who knows what I might get into tonight.

I laugh into the quiet room.

\_Or who I might get into tonight\_, I think to myself.

With one last smirk at myself in the mirror, I head out of my room and into the waiting cab.

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Two hours later, I'm feeling light and easy, actually glad that I agreed to come. "Okay, one more toast to the new town Doc and it's bedtime for us," Alice declares, holding up her beer.

I bring my beer up to tap it with theirs as I say, "What? Eleven too late for you two?"

Jasper chimes in then. "Well, we do have to be at the diner at six am, aside from our bedtime routine." His eyes cut to Alice and he gives her a brow waggle.

I burst out laughing and agree, "Oh it's definitely time for you two to go."

"Need a ride," Alice offers.

I shake my head. "Nah, I think I'm up for another round or two. I'll call a cab when I'm ready."

"If you're sure," Alice says already standing.

I wave my beer for them to go ahead. "Positive. Now get out of here."

She leans in and presses a kiss to my cheek before grabbing Jasper's hand and leading him through the dimly lit space. I watch them go with a wistful feeling. It'd be nice to have that when I'm their age, although my current situation almost assures me I won't.

It's when I'm on my final beer of the night that something catches my attention. Long dark locks and legs for days sit at the bar, nursing a drink before her. I hold my position but can't keep my eyes from her. I watch as she finishes it off in one, long gulp and stands, headed for the jukebox in the corner.

As soon as the music pours from the speakers, she starts swaying her hips. I'm entranced, caught like a deer in headlights. She's a heady mix of sensual and sexual. Her arms go over her head as she moves

onto the dance floor, swaying and curving her body in a way that makes my cock perk up.

Not being able to stay away, I kill my beer and move in close behind her. My hands land on her hips, then slide forward, pulling her back into me. I match her rhythm with my pelvis and drop my lips to her exposed neck. Her hands twine in my hair and for a moment, I wonder if I'm too drunk and imagining this happening. Surely, she wouldn't let a stranger grope her like this.

\_Would she? \_

The thought makes me angry, possessive. I trail my lips over her neck and when I get to her ear, I growl, "Would you let just anybody touch you like this, Bella?"

Her answer comes in the form of her body turning to face me, eyes dark and hooded. She pulls me close, leaving no empty space between us and lifts on tiptoes to speak in my ear. "No."

That's it. That's all she says, before dropping back down and continuing to grind against my throbbing cock. I clench my jaw it feels so fucking good, but this isn't what I want from her. Yes, I do want this, but I need more, more than just another quick fuck so she can avoid me until she's horny again.

Steeling myself, I bring my hand down and cup her ass, pulling her against me so hard she has to stop her sensual dance. Her eyes snap open and pierce me.

I hold her stare as I lean close, so fucking close I can smell the rum on her breath. "I can't stop thinking about you, what we did, it drives me insane. But it isn't enough. Don't fuck with me, Bella. I'm not a toy."

She pushes her lips against mine and although it lights a fire inside me, I have to break it off. I lean my forehead against hers. "We need to talk." When she opens her mouth to protest, I stop her by grinding into her again. Her eyes roll back. "Talk first. Then I'll give you what you really want."

Opening her eyes, she studies me carefully. Finally, with a small nod, she gives in to my demands. I grab her hand, in fear of her disappearing, and lead us from the bar out into the warm summer night.

"My place or yours?" I ask brow raised.

"Yours. I live with my dad." I say nothing, but this definitely raises more questions.

"Okay. Did you drive?" I'm not even sure what she drives, but she appears to be here alone, so I imagine she drove herself.

"Yep." This time, she's the one gripping my hand as she leads me to an old, antique looking truck. From what I can see, it looks to be perfectly maintained and in pristine, showroom condition which isn't surprising.

"This is yours?" It's hard to imagine someone so small driving this

beast.

"She was my dad's, but now she's mine." A look of sadness passes over her face, but it's gone just as fast as it came. Maybe I just imagined it. Shaking the thought from my head, I open her door for her and watch as she uses the frame to pull herself in, paying special attention to her plump ass, before turning and walking around to my side.

In no time, we're back at the hotel. I let us in telling her to make herself comfortable while I grab us each a bottle of water from my little fridge. After handing her the water and taking a seat on the small sofa next to her, we sit in silence. She's stiff and appears ready to bolt at any moment, so I figure we should start slowly. "Let's get some of the basics out of the way. Sound good?"

I can immediately see a change in her, the stiffness lessens and she leans back appearing much more relaxed. Her face even breaks into a small smile. "Sure â€| unless you want to skip to the fun stuff." She eyes the bed.

Sighing in exasperation, I choose to ignore what she said â€| for now. "So, Bella, how old are you? Are you even old enough to be in that bar tonight?"

She rolls her eyes and smirks. "It's a little late to be worried about my age now, isn't it, City?"

Now it's my turn to smirk. "I know you're legal. I'm not worried about that. I'm just trying to get to know you."

"Fine. I'm twenty-four." She grins and raises a brow. "Your turn. How old are you?"

"I'm thirty-one." Watching her to see how she'll react, I'm surprised when her expression never changes. "Are you okay with my age?" I ask hesitantly.

She giggles. I've never heard her giggle before. It's sweet and beautiful. I make a mental note that I need to hear it again. "What? Thirty-one? It's not like you're an old man, Edward. I know you're a doctor, so I pretty much guessed you had to be in your thirties â€| not that you look it."

I grin; more pleased than I should be that she doesn't think I look my age. "Okay, next question â€| did you always want to work on cars?"

"Yeah. My mama left when I was only two, so growin' up it was just my daddy and me. He owned the shop and used to bring me with him all the time. By the time I was eight, I was helpin' him anytime I could. I just feel at home there." Like earlier, a look of sadness briefly crosses her face, but before I can comment, her smile is back. "My turn again. Did you always wanna be a doctor?"

"Yes. My dad is a doctor and like your dad, he used to take me to work with him sometimes. I loved it. I guess in my head there's never been another option. Some boys wanted to be sports stars or whatever when they grew up. Not me. I always wanted to be the one that fixed up the sports stars when they were hurt." Thinking back on it now, my

dream was always to be a doctor, but one that spent time with patients and made a real difference. I haven't felt like I've succeeded in that at all. I shake off those morose thoughts for now and think of a new question.

We go back and forth for a bit asking mostly superficial questions. So far, we've managed to avoid the elephant in the room, but I don't want to avoid it anymore.

"So Bella â€¦ why have you been avoiding me?"

She sighs and says nothing for a while. I'm getting ready to push for an answer when she finally opens her mouth. "Look it's nothing personal, okay. It's justâ€¦" She huffs out a breath. "You're a great guy, Edward. You're smart and gorgeous and I love talking with you even when we're fightin'. And I know I could fall for a man like you. I also know you're only here because of your car. As great as you are, I know you ain't stayin' and I can't afford to lose my heart to you. I have too much ridin' on me."

As much as I don't like it, she's right. We shouldn't start anything since I'm only here for a short time. Still, my heart clenches at the thought of leaving â€¦ this town and her. But I'm not leaving right away, so I push the pain that thought brings, aside. I can dwell on it later.

"Okay. That's fair enough. But if you feel you should stay away from me, why did you dance with me at the bar and agree to come back here?" She's been so good at ducking me; I need to know why she's here with me now.

She stands and starts pacing the small length of the room. "I really don't know. Because I'm an idiot, a glutton for punishment, weak â€¦ take your pick. The fact is, I've tried to stay away from you. Then I heard you're stayin' for a while longer so when I saw ya at the bar, I couldn't resist ya anymore. I know I'm gonna to regret it, but I'm tired of fightin' what I feel for ya."

I stand up and make my way over to where she is. I take her in my arms and meet her eyes, those gorgeous brown eyes that have haunted me since the first time I saw them. "Then stop fighting it, baby. I'm not sure what will happen and I know we can't make any promises, but for now let's get to know each other and enjoy the time we have."

Her eyes look so conflicted that I almost let her go, but then I see resolve wash over her and before another thought can pass through my head, her lips are on mine. Blindly, lips still fused together, we cover the short distance to the bed, clothes dropping as we go.

This time, there's no ass slapping or rough sex from behind. This time, I take my time, covering every inch of her with my lips, caressing every curve with my palms. This time, I look into her eyes and watch as she falls apart beneath me with shuddering breaths and small moans. This time, I hold her close afterward and fall asleep with her in my arms.

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Even though I was woken up early the next morning for Bella to leave, the fact that she woke me up to say goodbye meant a lot. And, since then, we've spent a lot of time together. I doctor during the day while she works on cars and we get together in the evenings as much as we can.

Surprisingly, it's not even all sex between us. Sure, that shit is hot as fuck and has become my favorite place to be "inside her" but I almost enjoy talking just as much. She's smart as a whip and for a small town girl, she's more perceptive than I gave her credit for.

I can tell it in her expression when I brush her questions about my life back in DC aside. Almost every time it comes up, my heart starts beating erratically with thoughts of how I'm going to fix this. This fucked up situation I've managed to get myself into.

Avoiding her has become my norm, but I know burying my head won't make it go away. Unanswered calls have now turned into unanswered texts. The words are getting pissier and snider with each day that passes.

I made a promise, I know I did, but sometimes things come out of nowhere when you aren't even looking for them, and sometimes, those things are worth throwing it all away for, even when it's someone you care about. Feeling guiltier than ever, I slide my phone back in my pocket after reading the latest round of texts:

\_Answer the goddamn phone!\_

\_Is that car really more important than me?\_

\_We need to talk. It's important!\_

\_You know what? Just forget it!\_

\_I won't bother you again. See you when you get home. \_

I heave a heavy sigh and leave my office, getting back to my patients. Working as the town doc has been the most fulfilling experience I've had since becoming a physician. I already know half my patients by name, and I enjoy walking them through their illnesses instead of wondering later if someone I saw ever recovered.

I'm settling into this town and this life more and more with each day that passes. And somehow, I find myself not minding that shit at all. It's as if everything in DC was another lifetime, when in reality, it was last month. I was a different man then with a different outlook on life. Perhaps, a more jaded one. Who knew a small, shitty town could affect me so much?

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Life is getting better every day. I can't believe I've already been here over a month. My time is running low, but I try not to dwell on what will happen when my car is ready. I never knew I could find my way in life, my calling, both personally and professionally just because I was stranded.

As if conjured from my thoughts, I turn the corner and see my girl. A huge smile lights my face as I greet her. "Hey, baby. What are you doing here?"

She leans up and kisses me. We've come a long way in such a short time. She still has her walls, but they're coming down much faster than I ever expected or hoped for.

"It's a slow day at the shop, so I thought I'd bring ya lunch. You got some time?"

Just noticing the containers in her hands, my stomach rumbles. She giggles, something she's been doing a lot more of lately. "That sounds great. As you can tell, I'm starving." I guide her to my office after letting Ms. Cope, the receptionist, know that I'm taking an hour.

As soon as I close the door, I grab Bella and kiss her. She opens her mouth and her tongue darts out. Before we can get too into it, my damn stomach rumbles again. She pulls her lips away and there's that giggle again. "Come on, City. We better get you fed before you try to eat me."

Grinning, I pull her flush against me letting her feel exactly what she does to me. "Oh, baby, no matter what you have in those containers, I'm still going to want to eat you." I let my hand travel down to the top of her shorts, stopping with my fingers just barely dipped inside.

She rolls her eyes, but I also know her well enough now to see the desire. "Always with the dirty mind."

I let go of her and take the boxes from her hands. "You like my dirty mind." I sit everything down and pull my chair around while Bella opens up the containers.

"How are things goin'?" she asks as she puts the food on plates.

"Everything's going great."

"Are ya bored outta ya mind? I know Deputy Mark's Gout or little Eli sticking whatever he finds up his nose ain't nearly as excitin' as what you're used to."

I laugh. "Well, it may not be as exciting as some of the craziness I've dealt with in DC, but I'm definitely not bored. I mean, how can I be trying to figure out if Wayland is faking whatever illness he comes in with to get out of another night in the drunk tank. Not to mention having a beautiful woman bringing me lunch."

We chat as we eat and when we're finished, I lean back full and more content than I ever remember being. I hold open my arms inviting Bella to come to me. She settles herself quickly on my lap. Even though I'd like nothing more than to fuck her over the desk, I really enjoy just having her in my arms.

She snuggles into me, tucking her head into the crook of my neck. "I'm glad we ain't boring ya to death. I'd hate for you to wanna run

as soon as your car's ready and never look back."

Even though her tone is light, I can hear the worry behind the words. "Baby, you know I do have to leave once you have my car fixed, but I want to talk to you about it. I don't want this to be over. Can we maybe spend this weekend together, discuss our options?"

As complicated as things back home are and as much as Bella and I still have to talk about, leaving her and this town behind forever aren't going to be possible. In the short time I've known her; this Southern spitfire has become someone I find myself thinking about as soon as I wake up in the mornings and the one in my thoughts before I go to sleep.

Feeling her small puffs of air against my neck, I wait for her to answer. "Yeah. Getting together this weekend sounds good. I have some things I have to take care of first, but I'd love to."

We sit quietly, wrapped in each other for a few minutes. The fact that we'll be spending the weekend together and working things out for the future seems to have made us both more relaxed. Unfortunately, I know our time is coming to an end since I have patients scheduled for right after lunch.

"I wish you didn't have to go. Could I talk you into staying and being my assistant for the rest of the day?" I'm only half joking.

She turns and straddles me. "I wish I could, City. I'd much rather spend the day with your pretty face than looking at Mr. Masen's transmission."

I roll my eyes. "Pretty huh? Don't you mean ruggedly handsome?"

Leaning back, Bella examines my face. "Nah. I was right. Definitely pretty." She squeals when I start tickling her.

"Little girl, I'll teach you to tease me." My hands move from her ribs up to her tits, but before my fingers can reach her nipples, there's a knock on the door.

"Dr. Cullen, your next appointment is here." Having no time for anything else right now, I yell that I'll be right out.

We both chuckle before I stand, holding her to me, slowly lowering her to her feet. I lean in close to her ear. "Don't think I'll forget that. I owe you."

Before she can reply, I drop a quick kiss to her forehead and lead us out to the lobby. With the promise to stop by the shop as soon as I'm finished for the day, I watch her go before heading back to work.

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It's finally Friday. I'm nervous yet excited. Nervous because I need to tell Bella about her and this weekend could decide so much of my

future and our future together. Excited because it's a whole weekend for us to be together. This will be the longest amount of time we've spent together and I can't wait.

Tonight, the plan is to pick up some food and just relax. We've both worked all day, and it's not like Forks has a big nightlife, not that Bella is even into going out all that much, so just spending the evening together is good enough for us.

As I walk over to her shop, I reflect again on how different my life is here. Even dating Bella is much different from anything I've ever done. Before coming here, a date would consist of eating out at the nicest restaurants and going to the best clubs.

With Bella, I've learned she's most content spending nights in, and if we do go out she cares more about how the food tastes than how the atmosphere is. It doesn't matter if it's a hole in the wall or a pizza we pick up from the local pizzeria, she's happy.

And I'm happy with her. Happier with her and here in Forks than I ever remember being. In fact, the more I think about it, the more my heart tells me DC isn't my home anymore, and the trip I make back there will only be temporary. Just long enough to take care of some things.

Dealing with my job at the hospital will be easy enough. As much as I'd like to think I'm irreplaceable, the fact is that dozens of candidates are waiting in the wings for a chance at my job. It won't be difficult for the hospital to find someone to take over my position.

As for \_her, \_well I owe it to her to deal with things in person. No matter how things are now, I do care, and I can only hope she understands. The truth is, though, whether she understands or not, things aren't the same anymore and I can't and won't pretend they are.

That brings me back to Bella. I've come to realize and admit to myself that I love her. I'd love to tell her this weekend, but I won't. I need things taken care of back home before I can actually offer her anything. To do so now wouldn't be fair to anyone.

I will tell Bella the truth this weekend. It's the least I can do and it's the least she deserves. I just hope she can understand and forgive me for not saying anything sooner. She has to.

When I walk into Swan's, Bella's already waiting for me. Just that alone is enough to make my breath catch in my throat. The smile she's sporting is just another bonus. "Hey, City, I was wonderin' when ya was gonna make it." Her arms curl around me and it's the best fucking feeling in the world. And when she pulls away and picks up her overnight bag, my heart begins to beat double-time.

I reach for the bag and then take her hand. "You bringing the truck?"

"Yeah, I was hopin' you'd go somewhere with me tomorrow?" As she asks the question, there's apprehension in her beautiful gaze.

I smile and lay my free arm across her shoulder, pulling her close.

"Of course. I'll follow you any fucking where." With a kiss to the side of her head, I lead us out to the truck and open the driver's door for her to climb inside.

We stop and grab dinner to go from Alice's and then head back to my hotel. We eat and chat and make out while movies play in the background. Best fucking date ever. And then, when she yawns, I pick her up and take her to my bed, stripping her naked and removing my clothes to match.

She rides me slow and sensual while I lay back and enjoy the view, and when she's driven herself mad, I slide my finger below and drive her madder, to the brink, causing her to explode above me. Her head's thrown back and her hands work her tits, my eyes can't decide where to settle. And when she's out of steam, I flip her over and drive into her chasing my own release.

After laying there, attempting to catch our breaths, Bella raises up and looks to me. "How 'bout we move this party to the shower?" She's sporting a sexy smirk and my cock reacts.

I match her smirk and stand from the bed, holding my hand out for her. "You're going to be the death of me."

She giggles and follows me to where we encase ourselves in steam and she encases my cock in her mouth. The sight of her wet and kneeling before me is almost too much so I grab her, push her back against the wall and love her with my body like I do with my heart. And this time, when we retire back to bed, we're clean, spent and cuddled so close there isn't an inch of space between us.

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The next morning, I wake with the sunrise. Eyeing my naked goddess, I jump from the bed and don my running shorts. After calling in an order with Alice, I take off from the front of my hotel and make my way to the diner. Alice's smirk as she hands me my food, enough for two, doesn't go unnoticed. I just smirk right back and head out the door as fast as I entered, eager to be back with Bella.

I'm disappointed when I enter to find her already dressed and sitting by the window. "Morning," I offer, holding out the food.

She smiles that beautiful smile and it hits me right in the fucking chest. "Mornin', yourself. Whatcha bring me?" She's already reaching for the bag. Hmm, must've worked up an appetite last night.

I sit the bag on the table in front of her and have a seat. "You can have whatever you want." I run my hand up her bare thigh. "I think I want something other than food myself."

She shakes her head. "Insatiable." But then the teasing disappears. "I, uh, I was hoping we'd head out after breakfast."

"Oh," I breathe. "Yeah sure. Is everything okay?"

She smiles a small smile. "Everything's perfect. I just want to share a piece of me"â€"she looks at me from under her lashesâ€" "with

you."

And this is it, the implication is there. She's about to give me something, to open up about what makes her, well her, and I have to do the same.

Tomorrow, I vow to myself. Today is her day and I'll let her have it and take everything she's offering, and then tomorrow, I'll bare my all and hope she can accept it. Hope she can accept me and every part of me.

Unable to stay away, I close in and press my lips to hers. "Then I'm ready when you are," I assure her when I've pulled back.

We finish our breakfast in comfortable silence and take turns in the bathroom getting dressed. It isn't until we're done that she holds out her hand for me to take. "Ya ready to go?"

I smile and press a kiss to her forehead. "I'll go anywhere you lead."

And she does, lead me that is. Out to her truck and across town to a cute, little white house with blue shutters. There are flowerbeds lining the front landscape, and a wheelchair ramp leads up to the blue door.

Bella turns the truck off and just sits silently for a minute. I give it to her too, that minute. I'm not sure where we are or why, but I can tell it's important to her. Finally, she gets out and comes around to my side, opening the door and beckoning me out. I don't hesitate, and when I'm standing beside her, she takes my hand again and leads me to that blue door.

As we step onto the porch, Bella stops me with her hand on my chest. "Listen, City, I'll answer any questions you have about my life once we leave, but please don't ask anything while we're here."

"Yeah, baby, whatever you need." Smiling, I lean down to kiss her, hoping to show my devotion.

Her posture straightens and her smile is blinding when I pull away. Putting her arm through mine, she approaches the door. She lets us right in, so I quickly guess this is her home with her father. My thoughts are confirmed when she calls out, "Daddy, I'm home."

I look toward the direction she called and expect to see some huge man ready to threaten me within an inch of my life for being with his baby girl. Instead, it's a frail man in a wheelchair. The doctor in me knows immediately from the way his face slightly sags on one side that this man has had a stroke.

"Hey, Bells. I wasn't sure if you were coming home today." He eyes me up and down, and even in the state he's in, it's enough to make my balls shrink. In his better days, he must have been a real terror to any man that dared look at his daughter.

Bella grabs my hand and pulls me over to him. "Well, I wanted to introduce you two. Daddy, this is Dr. Edward Cullen. Edward, this is Charlie Swan, my daddy." He puts his left hand out to me. I'm sure it's his strong one, since looking at his face, his right side is the

one most affected.

He grips my hand with all the strength he probably has. It's not really enough to hurt, but much more than I would've expected.

"Pleasure to meet you, sir." I withdraw my hand and Bella immediately grabs it back into her own.

"Nice to finally meet the man that's been spending time with my daughter. I was beginnin' to think she was gonna keep you away forever." His speech is slurred, but you can still understand him.

"Now, Daddy, you know Edward's been busy gettin' settled. Let's head to the living room." She goes to try to push her dad's chair, but he waves her hands off, wheeling himself.

Once we're all comfortable, her dad starts talking again. "So Edward, how ya likin' our little town? I'm sure it's a lot different than what you're used to."

"I really like it. It is a lot different, but I'm finding that it's a good different." Looking over at Bella, she has a soft smile on her face.

We sit around and talk for a bit longer before Charlie gets tired. Bella helps him to bed, despite his protests. When she comes back, she looks more nervous than I've ever seen. This is not my spitfire at all.

Quietly, I stand and offer her my hand. Once hers is secure in mine, I lead us out to her truck. The ride back to the hotel is silent. We both know we're waiting until we're in my room for the conversation that needs to happen.

Soon enough, I'm unlocking the door and ushering us inside. As the door closes, I pull her to me and hold her close. "No matter what you have to say, nothing will change how I feel about you." I pull back and look into her eyes. "Okay?"

The crease between her eyes smooths out and I know I said the right thing. This time, when I take her hand, I walk us over to the bed and remove her shoes and pants and then my own. We both climb under the covers, and I open my arms to invite her to be close to me.

After we're settled, I wait for her to start. When she does, her voice is low to match the quiet of the room. "My daddy and I have always been close. When my mama left, it kinda became him and me against the world. He's my best friend and my protector. He taught me everythin' about cars, how to punch, and to his complete mortification, how to put on my first trainin' bra."

"I bet that was a sight to see." I laugh at the idea of her poor dad having to deal with all the things that come along with raising a girl.

"It was. Here's this big strong mans man and he's dealin' with periods and bras and teenage hormones. But he was great about it all. Even when I was a brat. He's definitely the best dad I could ask for."

It was an easy choice to decide to stay here and help him in the shop. He begged me to go to college first. He wanted me to experience life away from here."

"I didn't know you went to college." Clearly I'm learning a lot about this woman I already love. Funny how everything I learn just fascinates me more.

"Well, you don't know everything about me, City. Not yet anyway." Her fingers start playing with my nipple. My cock immediately takes notice, but I try not to focus on it and focus instead on her words.

Trying to redirect her, I cover her hand and lace our fingers. "What did you study?"

"Business. No matter what my daddy wanted, my plan has always been to work with him. I figured I already knew about cars, so I should learn about the business side."

"Very smart decision." She continues to amaze me. "Did you get your degree?"

"I did. I went to college, partied, lived independently for the first time, but always kept my eye on the prize. When I graduated, I came home. I found my own place to live and started workin' with my dad. Life was easy. Then, I'm out one night, hangin' with some friends and don't notice the missed calls. By the time I did notice 'em, I rushed to the hospital to find out Daddy had a stroke."

The doctor in me wants to ask her half a dozen questions, but the â€| well whatever I am to her, knows I just need to offer her my support. So I stay quiet, waiting for her to continue.

"As you know, he survived, but life changed for us both that day. At first, he couldn't walk or talk. I thought for sure I was gonna lose him because he kept havin' these mini strokes. Once he was outta the woods, he was able to start therapy, but at first, he needed a lot of help so I moved back home. Obviously, he couldn't work anymore, so I took over Swan's hopin' to keep it goin' until he was better." She sighs and I'm pretty sure I know what's coming.

"With a lot of therapy, he got better. He's even able to take care of himself when I'm not around. But we've been told that he probably won't have much more improvement. It's okay, though, because at least I still have him. But it meant I had to grow up. That's why I was so standoffish when you first came. I owe it to Daddy to take care of the business he built and to be here for him as he was for me. I wanted you right away, but I didn't want to risk losin' myself when you wasn't gonna stay."

She leans up, and even in the dim light, our eyes connect. "When I saw you at the bar that night I knew I couldn't keep fightin' it, fightin' what I feel. I worked so hard to take care of my daddy, keep the business runnin' and the bills paid. I've done a damn good job of it, but that night, I decided that I wanted to be selfish for once."

"I'm so glad you came up to me that night, but Bella you have to know that isn't selfish. Wanting something for yourself is okay."



"Well selfish or not, the fact is, I did come up to you and come back here and now â€¦ Well, now I've gone and fallen in love with you and it's gonna wreck me when you leave." My breath catches at her admission.

She starts to move away from me when my brain finally starts working again. Sitting up, my hands cup her face. "Bella you have to know I love you too. And as for going home â€¦ well, there are things we need to discuss, but we can work this out." I want to lay everything out, the fact that I want to stay with her forever, but she needs to know the truth about my life in DC first. Tomorrow, after I tell her everything, if she'll still have me, we can make plans for our future together.

For now, I pull her face to mine, kissing her with all the love and passion I have. Slowly, I make love to her, pouring my heart and soul into it. When we finish we fall asleep curled around each other.

The next morning is a repeat of Saturday, only when I get back with breakfast, she's still lying naked under the covers, a slim leg peeking out to entice me. Shaking my head clear, I go over and lay small pecks over her face. Her eyes open and the smile that lights her face is magnificent. Stretching her arms over her head, she gives me a view of skin with every movement. My eyes trail over her and marvel at how lucky I am. Just before my tingling fingers reach out to touch, she pulls the covers tight under her chin and giggles.

My eyes snap to hers, and I smirk. "Is my spitfire ready to play this morning?"

She shakes her head, no, but the smile never wavers. "I was hopin' we could eat that yummy smellin' food while ya fill me in on what has ya so worried."

I sober instantly, the reality of what I have to do washes over me. "Sounds good. I'm going to take a shower right fast and I'll meet you at the table in ten. Okay?"

"Perfect," she answers, nudging the blanket down just a touch. I stand stock still, hoping for more. Then she laughs, loud and boisterous. "What ya think I'm gonna let ya have a peek first? No way, we'd never eat then."

Her light teasing mood makes me smile and I can't help but lean down and kiss her â€¦ hard. When I pull back, I grab a clean pair of sweats and head straight for the bathroom without looking back.

I turn on the water and let the steam fill the room before I slide under the hot spray. Not wasting a minute, I soap up and wash as quickly as possible. Sure, this conversation is going to be a hard one, but I love Bella and she loves me so we can get through it. I know we can. We have to.

Once I've rinsed, I turn off the water and grab the towel I had laid out. Just as I'm drying my hair, I hear a loud bang. Wondering what the hell it was, I hurry to wrap the towel around my waist and exit the bathroom.

Only I stop short as soon as I've stepped out the door. The scene

before me is nothing like the one I left. There's still a woman here, but not my woman.

It's her.

And Bella is nowhere to be seen.

"Where the fuck is Bella?" I ask barely able to contain my rage.

She's sitting at the table buttering a piece of toast and pauses to look at me. "Oh, is that her name?"

Although this is one of the things I love most about her, her easy-going attitude, right now all she's doing is pissing me off more. "Yes, that's her goddamn name. Now where is she?" I demand.

She lays the toast down on the container of open food, Bella's open food, and fixes me with her bright, blue gaze. "You know, Edward, I'd have thought you'd be happy to see me."

I'm so overcome with anger right now that all I can do is slide my hand through my still damp locks and ball it into a tight fist. "Maybe if I'd known you were coming," I grit out. "Now where the fuck is she?"

She stands now, hand on hip. "Maybe if you'd answered your goddamn phone, I wouldn't have had to show up here like some fucking stalker!"

She's pissed, but I can't even find it in me to give a fuck. "What. Did. You. Say. To. Her."

She laughs, she fucking laughs, and it's not a nice laugh but an evil one. One that I've heard my whole life when she's been up to something. It's in this very second that I know it's bad.

When she's done, she fixes her blue eyes back on me, allowing them to run down my half-naked body before staring me right in the eyes. And then she smirks. "I didn't say anything really. I just asked where my baby daddy was." She holds my stare refusing to back down while my anger builds like a volcano, threatening to explode all over her.

I have to get away before I do something I'll regret forever. I retreat to the bathroom, slamming the door behind me and lean against it. Taking steady breaths and counting down from ten, I do everything I can to calm the rage that is flowing through me.

And when the rage subsides, the panic sets in. Not only did I not get a chance to tell Bella, but she fucking showed up and made everything seem worse than it really is. Not that it isn't bad, I should've already told Bella, but this isn't what she was supposed to hear first.

Deciding I need to do something, anything, I throw on my sweats and storm back into my room. She's back at the table, eating away at Bella's breakfast. Ignoring her, I throw on a T-shirt and my shoes, grab my keys and start for the door.

Her head follows my movements and as soon as she starts to open her mouth, I raise my hand. "Just fucking don't."

I take off running, not giving a fuck, and run until I'm at the end of Bella's driveway. I notice her truck parked out front and take off again, straight to the front door. I start by knocking, but when no answer comes, I resort to banging. When still no answer comes, I start yelling, begging her to please come to the door and talk to me.

Just when I think it's no use, I hear something on the other side. Slowly, the door creaks open and my eyes widen. Charlie Swan is sitting there in his wheelchair, a shotgun propped across his lap.

I automatically take a step back. "Oh, um, sorry, sir." Then I try to peer past him. "Could I speak to Bella, please?"

He snorts. "Son, I don't know what ya did, but whatever it was, she's pissed. Now best thing I can suggest is ya make ya way on back the way ya came."

"Pleaâ€" "

"Ain't no please here can help ya. She said to let ya know your car will be ready for pick up Wednesday mornin' and to call Rose for the arrangements." He rests his hand on the shotgun. "Now, I ain't gonna ask ya again." His head tilts to the yard behind me and my whole being deflates.

With one last, pleading look, I turn and trudge from the door, my heart breaking more and more with every step away from her I take.

I fucked up.

I fucked up big.

The trek back to the hotel goes much slower than the trip over. I take my time, turning everything over in my mind and come to the conclusion that this is all my fucking fault. Every last bit of it. All I had to do was answer her phone calls, or hell, even just one text, and I didn't. I ignored her and treated her as if she meant nothing.

And she doesn't mean nothing. She means a lot. I was just too caught up in me and the new path I'd found myself on to even give a fuck about what I'd left behind. And now, with startling clarity, it's staring me in the face, and with it, all the consequences of my stupid fucking actions.

By the time I enter my room again, my anger has given way to pain. My pain. The pain of hurting Bella. The pain of knowing how much I'm going to hurt her.

"You don't look so good," she says, standing and approaching me cautiously.

When I don't lash out, she circles her arms around me, and I let her, embrace her even, because when she hears what I'm about to say, she may never even speak to me again, much less touch me. And that thought hurts, but not as much as knowing how badly I hurt

Bella.

"I'm sorry," she says quietly into the silent room.

I shake my head and pull back, grabbing her by her upper arms and looking into her clear, blue eyes. "You have nothing to be sorry for, Kate. I'm a shitty person and I should've answered your calls."

"Why didn't you, Edward. You know how important this is to me." There's a hurt in her voice that almost kills me to hear.

I tilt my head toward the table where my breakfast sits, cold and uneaten. "Let's talk."

She nods and goes to take up the chair she'd previously sat in and moves the empty food container aside. She props her arms on the table in front of her and her blue eyes study me as I stall by moving my food to the trash.

When I have nothing left to occupy me, I sit before her and take her hands between my much larger ones. "You know, I was just going to a convention, something to get out of DC for a week, clear my head. But then, I wrecked my car, and well, life grabbed me by the balls."

Her brows rise and a small smile plays on the corner of her lips. "You mean Bella, right?"

I chuckle uneasily. "TouchÃ©."

"But I don't understand what that has to do with ignoring me. I mean, she doesn't have you so much by the balls that you can't speak to your best friend, does she? Are you not allowed?" she asks with a bite to her words.

I shake my head immediately. "No, nothing like that." I take a deep breath and let it out slowly then I say, "I found my future here in this small, shitty town."

She smiles a beaming smile. "Good for you, Edward. I'm so happy for you." She squeezes my hands. "I messed that up with what I said, didn't I? I can fix it, Edward. Just let me talk to her, I'll explain everything."

I stop her rambling. "No, Kate. \_I\_ messed up. Not you."

Her eyes are sad for me, and I fucking hate that I'm going to destroy that sadness and turn it into hate. "Are you sure, Edward? She has to listâ€œ"

"Just stop," I interrupt a bit more harshly than I intended. I soften my voice. "I have to fix this, not you. But I have to start with saying something that's going to hurt."

Emotions flit over her face so fast I can barely keep up, and when her lips tighten into a line, it's clear she's honed in on the right one. "No," she says harshly, snatching her hand from mine and standing over me, finger pointing. "No, you're not. Don't even say it, Edward." I close my eyes, not wanting to see the hurt and anger. "How could you do this to me?"

She's broken, her voice sounding like the little girl I grew up with when her parents disappointed her like they did so often. And now, it's me. I've broken her.

"I'm sorry," I say, my voice cracking. "I didn't mean to, it just happened."

Her eyes snap to mine and fire burns bright. "It just happened? What the fuck just happened? You fell in love with some small town girl and now you're breaking a promise to your best friend?" Her words are heated as she slams her hand on her chest. "How the fuck does that just happen? It's a fucking choice. One you're making!" She points at me as she finishes her rant and starts pacing.

"Did she ask you to do this?" she asks incredulously, not even bothering to look at me. "No woman who loves you would ask that you break a promise like this. A promise to your lifelong friend."

I stand and step in front of her, grabbing her shoulders so she has no choice but to listen to me, to fucking hear me. "Bella had no idea, Kate. She still has no idea although she sure as hell thinks something since you showed up here unannounced." I snort.

She goes to snatch away. "That was your fucking fault!"

Fuck! My shoulders sag. "I know, I'm sorry. Fuck! I didn't mean it like that," I assure her not allowing her to turn away. "Just listen, okay?" I say softly, defeated.

Her eyes are filled with unshed angry tears but she still manages to give me a small nod.

"When I made that promise, Kate, it was because you're my best friend and I love you. I'd do anything for you. At the time, though, I had no reason to care who had my baby, and I'm sorry, but now I do. I see my future with Bella, and even though she wants nothing to do with me now, I won't make a decision like this without her being a part of it," I explain, watching her face for any signs of softening.

There's none. "Make a decision like this," she repeats sarcastically. "Did you forget that you've already made a decision? That you made a fucking promise to someone who's been by your side your whole life? Did you forget that fact, Edward?"

"I'm sorry, Kate," I say meaning it with my very soul. I don't want to hurt her. I love her, she's my best friend, but I can't just go giving out my sperm without discussing it with the woman I intend to marry. And I do. Intend to marry Bella that is. I just have to get her forgiveness first.

The tears start to spill and I pull her close, cradling her in my arms. "I'm so sorry," I say rubbing my hand down her hair in hopes to soothe her. "Shh. I swear I didn't mean for this to happen. Please forgive me, Kate. I didn't mean to," I mumble my apologies over and over.

After countless minutes, she finally reins herself in and pulls back to look at me with red-rimmed eyes. Her hand reaches up to cup my cheek. "You know I love you, Edward, and I'm happy for you. So

fucking happy, but this hurts. You hurt me. You know how bad Tanya and I have wanted this and for how long. I'm sorry too. We'll talk again later. I need some time." She leans up and kisses me on the cheek before grabbing her purse and turning to walk out the door, and possibly, out of my life.

I sink to my bed in defeat. That's two women in one day.

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I've tried countless times to talk to Bella since she left Sunday. Unfortunately, my time is up and I'm picking up my car and headed back to DC today.

I really don't want to leave with things like this between us, but I have no choice. The hospital expects me back, and even though I have no plans to stay in DC longer than absolutely necessary, there are things that must be taken care of.

Delaying things won't get me back here any sooner, so I turn in my room key and head over to Swans. I know she won't be there, but I still deflate when I see Rose in the shop instead of Bella. Part of me hoped she'd want to see me before I left.

Rose has never really warmed up to me and has been downright icy since things fell apart with Bella. Unfortunately, once Bella went into hiding again, I've had no choice but to deal with the blond Amazon. "Hi, Ro. I guess Bella's still avoiding me?"

I expect a glare, but the look on her face comes much closer to pity. "Yep. I'm not sure what happened, but whatever it was, you seriously fucked up." Before I can respond, she holds her hands up. "Now it ain't none of my business, but Bella is my best friend. I don't really care whose fault it was, but I know her and she's real hurt. I don't like seein' her that way. You're lucky I don't kick ya ass. The thing is, I can see you're as broken as she is, so I'm gonna let it go. Especially since ya leavin' today." Ro may look like a model from a magazine, but I have no doubt she could kick some serious ass.

"I'm really sorry I hurt Bella. All I can say is that was never my intention. You don't really know me and your loyalty lies with her, but I hope you can give her a message for me."

"Tell me the message and then I'll decide. I ain't gonna agree to anythin' that might hurt her more." Even if she hasn't actually agreed yet, I can't help but smile. Bella has good friends and people that love her. Knowing they will be here for her while I can't means a lot.

"Fair enough. Will you please tell her that things aren't exactly as they seem and that even though I am leaving now, I'm not giving up on her." I'd love to tell her more, but I want to give her the details myself.

Ro scrutinizes my face before finally giving a nod. "I'm not sure what ya plan is or how you plan to fix things seein' as how you won't be here, but I'll tell her what you said."

Feeling only the smallest relief knowing, at least, my message will be relayed, I finish taking care of business and head out with the last thank you to Ro.

As I make my way through the town I've come to love, it's as if I'm leaving part of myself behind. The only way I'm able to keep driving is because I know I'm coming back.

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Being back in DC is miserable. I wasn't exactly happy when I left and now that I know what true happiness is, it's as though I'm constrained and struggling to breathe. Thankfully I've been able to keep myself busy closing up my life here.

I told my parents first. While they're sad to know I'm leaving, they understand. Now that they're both retired, they travel quite frequently, so they're excited about the prospect of visiting me in Forks and meeting Bella — once she forgives me.

The hospital accepted my resignation easily enough, just as I expected, and my apartment has always been fairly basic and bare, so packing has been simple.

Even saying goodbye to my personal life here has been easy. Other than Kate, I'm not really close to anyone else so the farewells have been mostly impersonal and done out of politeness more than anything.

Thinking of Kate does bring me to my one and only regret about leaving. I've tried calling and texting, but so far, she hasn't responded.

Kate has been my best friend since we were babies. We're only a few months apart and our parents are close friends, so we basically grew up together.

Even though it's always been the hope of our parents for us to become a couple, we never felt that way for each other. There are times we thought about it, but nothing ever came of it. Mostly due to the fact that we both love pussy. In fact, I was the first person Kate came to when she realized as a young woman that she was a lesbian.

She cried in my arms when her parents rejected her after she told them. We've been through everything together, so when she met Tanya and fell in love, I was thrilled for her. No one deserved love more.

When she came to me months ago asking if I'd be willing to donate sperm so she and Tanya could have a child, I quickly agreed. She's my best friend and I wanted her to be happy.

When I left DC, I just needed a week to clear my head. Get out of that godforsaken town and away from all the stress from the hospital. I never thought anything could happen to make me question that promise I'd made. After all, it didn't appear I'd be having children of my own and had no one special in my life to worry about.

Then I met Bella.

As soon as I realized I cared for her for more than sex, I knew things had to change with Kate. I couldn't give her a child when my entire prospects for the future had changed. But keeping it silent wasn't fair to either of them. I should've told Bella of my promise when things started to get serious, and Kate deserved to know my life had taken a drastic turn, instead of being ignored. I hurt the two women I love most. Now all I can do is hope they forgive me.

Knowing time is running out and that I'm leaving soon with no plans of moving back, I have to try again to talk to Kate.

Grateful that at least one woman I've hurt doesn't have a gun-toting father, I'm still apprehensive as I approach the door. I have her favorite flowers and the chocolate truffles she loves from the bakery nearby. Maybe those will, at least, get me inside.

Kate answers. "Edward, what are you doing here?"

"I came to speak to you. I've tried to give you time and space, but I'm leaving soon and I wanted to see you before I go. I brought gifts." I motion to the flowers and treats in my hands.

She opens the door wider, inviting me in. "Tan's gone out to grab dinner. Have a seat in the den." She takes the gifts and heads into the kitchen. She quickly comes back to join me. "So you're really doing it? You're moving back to that town? I'm glad you were able to work things out with your girl â€¦ Bella's her name, right?"

"Yes, that's her name. And I haven't worked things out with her yet, but I will."

Her eyes soften and she reaches out, taking my hand. "I really am sorry that I ruined things for you. I never meant to. No matter how upset I am, I want you to be happy."

Squeezing her hand, I'm relieved she still cares. "Thank you, but I didn't come here to discuss my fuck ups with Bella. I have faith that we'll work things out. I ended up in that town for a reason, and I believe things will be okay there. What I'm not sure about, is if you can ever forgive me."

A tear slips down her face. "Oh Edward, of course, I'll forgive you. I'm pissed and hurt, but I love you. You're my best friend. I can't pretend like I'm happy with your decision or that it doesn't break my heart, but I've done a lot of thinking and I understand why you're saying no."

I pull her to me and hug her as I whisper my apologies.

We spend more time talking, and I finally leave when Tanya comes back with their food. They invite me to stay, but I have a lot left to do. With a last hug to them both and the promise of a visit from them after I've settled in, I say goodbye.

Life is taking us in different paths right now, and it's sad to know she won't be in the same city anymore. I feel confident, though, that



we will always be in each other's lives. With one last look at their closed door, I make my way toward my new life.

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Arriving back in Forks feels like coming home. And I guess I really am.

I've stayed in touch with Alice, and she's been a miracle worker. She's managed to find me a house not far from Bella and her dad. She's promised to oversee the movers and get things in order. She refuses any talk of payment for her efforts, but I have it on good authority—the authority being Jasper—that Alice loves time at the spa in the next town over, so I've arranged multiple gift certificates for her to use at any time.

When I first decided to make my home in Forks, I worried what I would do for work. I loved filling in for Dr. Banner, so my initial thoughts were of opening my own office here. I didn't relish the idea of competing against the town's beloved doctor but felt I didn't have much choice unless I wanted to go further out to the bigger city.

Thankfully, that matter has also been taken care of. Dr. Banner called me right before I left for DC. He was pleased with how I'd handled things in his absence and said I'd impressed many of his patients. He mentioned that he was looking to retire since his health wasn't great and wondered if I had any interest in taking over for him.

Starting next week, I'll be working with Dr. Banner for two months, and then he'll officially retire, selling his practice to me.

Everything is falling into place making me surer than ever that moving here is the right thing for me. Now all I need to do is get my girl back.

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I spend the rest of the week settling my stuff in the house. It's probably more than a single man needs, but I'm hoping to fill it to the brim one day. Kids, Bella, her dad; I want it all. But first, I have to make her talk to me.

I go into the town florist as soon as I've gotten my house somewhat settled. A good place to start right? I order a large bouquet of Gerber Daisies to be sent to Swan's and attach a simple note:

\_I'm here to stay and I won't give up. Please, allow me to tell you the truth.\_

Each day that passes a new bouquet is ordered and another note is attached:

\_I promise it's not as bad as it seems.\_

\_I miss you, Bella.\_

\_I love you, Bella.\_

\_I'm never leaving again. \_

\_Fuck, baby, please, talk to me. \_

As the days pass, my tone gets more desperate. Living here without her is still more satisfying than DC ever was, but I need her like the fucking air I breathe. The ache in my chest is constant, a reminder of what I've lost and how desperately I need it back.

Work keeps me fulfilled professionally, and I can see why Dr. Banner is so loved by the town. He knows everyone by name and every condition they've ever had. This is what I'm working toward. I \_want\_ to be invested in my patients as much as he is.

By week two, I feel like I may go insane. There's been no word from Bella no matter how many times I've begged her to call me or stop by. Not that I've included my address for a week straight on those notes or anything. I've even stopped by Swan's a handful of times only to be sent on my way by Ro.

Feeling stressed and fucking sick of waiting, I end up at The Hut again on my third Friday back in town, drowning my sorrows in a bottle. I have to say, I'm feeling a bit discouraged. I can't fix anything if she won't even talk to me.

Well into my fourth beer, the jukebox comes to life. It's been pretty quiet all night so the sudden music has my eyes scanning the room, remembering the last time I was here. So lost am I in my visions that I almost miss it.

Her.

Bella. She's here.

And she's not alone.

Her body is sliding against some douche who has his hands on her hips, attempting to take a peek down the front of her shirt.

Hell fucking no!

I stand and approach before my mind can even consider my actions. I put my hand on dude's shoulder and push then grab Bella's arm, dragging her behind me as I head straight for the door. This is definitely not how or when I wanted to talk to her but fuck if she's going to rub the shit in my face without hearing me out first.

When the cool night air hits, so does the realization of my actions, but fuck it, I've already started this train, might as well stay on track. Seeing her truck in the back corner, I don't stop until I reach it, snatching her around to face me. "Open the door," I say, my voice tightly controlled.

She eyes me up and down and smirks before taking out her key and passing it to me. I unlock the door and prod her to get in then

follow behind, starting the engine without a word. The drive to my place is filled with tense silence. Both of us simmering underneath the surface.

By the time I stop in my drive and kill the engine, my breaths are coming in pants, the anger and hurt manifesting into a physical symptom. My heart is hammering in my chest and I can't decide if it's from the anger or the realization that this is my shot. It may be my only shot.

"How'd that feel, City?" Her voice breaks the silence and my mind churns over her words.

Yep, anger is definitely the more prominent emotion now. "What the fuck did you just say?" I snap my head in her direction only to be met with a smirking Bella. "Are you seriously fucking with me right now?" I slam my hands onto the steering wheel in frustration.

"Whoa," she yells, grabbing my arms to lower them. "Pitch a hissy all ya want, but this is my truck and you'd better keep ya hands to yourself. Got that?"

I take a deep breath and nod then I turn in her direction. "So, what's your angle, Bella? Why would you pull a stunt like that? You had to know I was there."

She crosses her arms over her chest. "Oh, I knew. See, here's the thing, City. How'd it feel to see someone ya supposedly love gettin' cozy with someone else? Huh? Tell me that."

My brows furrow. "You did it on purpose?"

"Yeah, I did," she answers, lifting a brow. "Although I'm still not sure it was even close to how bad you hurt me."

My shoulders deflate. I did fucking hurt her, just not how she thinks. "Look, Bella," I say with a sigh. "I did hurt you, I know I did, but I hurt you by not giving all of me when I should've. I had plenty of opportunities and kept putting it off â€¦ until it was too late."

She snorts. "Ya think."

"No," I rush to assure her. "It's still not what you think. I didn't lie to you in my notes." I chance a glance into her soulful brown eyes. "You did read my notes, didn't you?"

"How could I not." She shrugs. "It was easy to ignore the first five, but when they kept comin', I figured ya must've had somethin' to get off ya chest." She takes a deep breath. "So, here I am. Talk."

So I do. I start from the beginning, probably farther back than she wants to know. I tell her all about Kate and what she means to me, how much a part of my life she is. I tell her about the promise I made and the conclusion I'd come to after meeting her, but sadly, didn't share with either of the women I loved.

And when I'm done talking, I idly play with the steering wheel waiting for her to say something. She stays silent and I'm afraid to

meet her eyes. I imagine more anger brewing or even pity. Neither is what I want from her.

"So that's it," she finally asks. "That's ya big secret? No girlfriend or wife or even baby mama. Just a lesbian best friend you'd promised to donate sperm to?"

Her tone is curious, so I chance a look her direction, and blow out a huge breath. "Yeah, that's it."

"Why wouldn't ya share somethin' like that with me? After I shared everythin' with you." She shakes her head. "I don't get it."

"I was, that day actually," I promise. "I mean, it sort of hit me after we started seeing each other. At first, I was just ignoring Kate, taking a break from everything DC, but then, you somehow became everything I never knew I wanted and those plans sailed out the window in my mind. I was just too big of a coward to admit it to her. And well, you see how that turned out. I fucked it all up so bad." I throw my head back against the seat just staring at the ceiling.

"So what did she say when ya told her?" she asks quietly.

"She's angry, but she'll forgive me completely â€| one day," I reply just as quietly. I roll my head to the side and look at Bella again. "What about you? Can you forgive me?"

"It's a shame there'd be nothin' to forgive if you'd just told me. It's not like this is my choice to make anyway. Course, I'm actually glad that you've changed ya mind, but even if ya went through with it, I wouldn't be mad. It ain't my right," she says with a hint of sadness.

I reach for her hand and she allows me to take it, her eyes intent on our touch. Rubbing my thumb over her wrist, I say, "Bella, meeting you changed my whole perspective on life. Before, I'd have gladly helped them have a baby, but if I'm being honest, now I can't imagine anyone but you being swollen with my child."

Her eyes snap to mine. "Ya imagine that?"

"Oh, baby. You have no idea," I say my voice rough. "I want it all. And I want it with you. Please tell me I haven't fucked that up. Please."

She scoots over; the heat from her body closer than it's been in so long. I sigh into it. "Ya haven't fucked it up, City."

My whole being relaxes with her words. "Are you sure, Bella? I need you to be sure you can forgive me. I don't know what I'd do if you couldn't, but I can't handle thinking I have a chance and then learning I don't." My voice is almost pleading, but I don't care. She means everything to me and I have to know her words are real before I allow the hope to bloom.

Instead of responding, she pushes her lips to mine. I can do nothing but pull her closer and savor every twist and thrust of our tongues. I commit them to memory. I cherish every second.

All too soon, the kiss is over, but she leans her forehead against

mine. "I've already forgiven ya. Now show me this house ya done bought." Her smile is mischievous as she tugs on my hand and leads me from the truck.

As soon as we get inside, Bella spins around and jumps into my arms. I turn and pin her to the door. Putting my hands under her ass, I lift, letting her wrap her legs around my waist. As much as I'm enjoying what's going on, I don't want our first time together again to be in my entryway, so I walk us to my bedroom where we spend the rest of the night making up.

We start rough and desperate, needing to reconnect in the most primal way. Then we switch to sweet and tender, pouring out our love and devotion. It's the best night of my life so far.

After sleeping in the next day, we go visit Charlie. Apparently, she'd called him at some point to let him know she wouldn't be home, and he made her promise to bring me over for lunch.

I was okay with the idea when she initially mentioned it, but now, sitting her in front of her house, I'm not so sure. Bella laughs when I hesitate to get out of the truck. "Baby, the man had a gun in his hands the last time I was here."

The woman actually rolls her eyes at me. "Ya was bangin' on the door like a madman and his only daughter had just come home upset. Of course, he got his gun. If it makes you feel better, he wouldn't really shoot you â€| well probably not."

With a wink, she giggles and offers me her hand. "Come on, City. Seriously, he'll be happy to see you. He's been tryin' to get me to listen to you since Ro told him about the flowers and notes. Plus, you're the local doc now, so he knows he has to stay on ya good side."

Sure enough, Charlie is much more pleasant than the last time I saw him. He's even more understanding than I could've hoped when he hears the details about Kate and what I had agreed to. We have a good visit, and even with only officially meeting him twice, I can tell there's been some improvement in his speech since the last time I saw him.

After we leave, I mention it to Bella, and she tells me it's his new speech therapist, Sue. Apparently, she's a very pretty, \_single, \_older woman, and Bella firmly believes her dad has a crush, which is motivating him to do his best to impress her.

Later that evening, after another round of hot as fuck makeup sex, we head to the diner. Alice squeals as soon as she sees us, Bella's hand firmly clasped in mine. "I just knew things would work out. I'm not sure if I told ya, but I tend to know things. Been that way since I was knee high to a grasshopper."

Since it isn't too busy, she sits with us until our food's ready. Everyone that comes in to eat or pick up an order waves hello and knows everyone else by name. It's surreal coming from a city where no one really knew anyone, but I find myself liking it.

After we eat, we head back to my house. "You want the grand tour now? You didn't see much last night or this morning."

She giggles. "I'd love a tour." She loops her arm through mine, and I let us inside. I show her my home, hoping she likes it since I plan on it someday being hers too.

We end up back in the living room on the couch. "It's really nice, City. I've always loved this house." She sighs wistfully.

"You're welcome anytime, Baby. As a matter of fact, I plan on having you here as much as I'm able."

We still have to figure out a lot and her dad still needs her around, so I can't be selfish or too greedy, but I want her in my house and in my bed as often as possible.

"Oh yeah? I like the idea of ya having me here a lot. I mean, it's a big house." She takes her shirt off and straddles my lap. "Lots of places to christen."

"That's true. We've barely even started. Want to work on a few more places tonight?"

Her lips attack mine. We end up christening quite a few places â€| Bella bent over the couch, my mouth on her while she's spread out on my dining table, her taking me down her throat in the hallway. We collapse into bed, exhausted, but well satisfied.

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Life in Forks is better than I even imagined. Where in DC, I felt stifled and uptight, now I feel happy and free. I never would've expected myself to be someone that finds pleasure in walks down the street or reading on the front porch, but I love it all.

Dr. Banner is officially gone and the practice is mine. The work is fulfilling, and I feel like I'm really able to make a difference in my patient's lives.

Things with Bella are amazing. We eat dinner with her dad almost every night during the week, then she helps him with anything he needs before coming home with me. Since I live so close, it's easy for her to get home if he ever needs her.

I've met Sue, who Bella persuades to eat with us as often as she can. I'm no expert, but I'd say Charlie isn't the only one with a crush. She's really nice and patient, but also pushes him, which I think is a good thing.

Things couldn't be any better except for the one thing ... Kate. Our relationship is still a bit strained but on the mend. We've recently started talking regularly again, but I miss seeing her in person. When she calls me to let me know she and Tanya are coming for a visit six months after I've moved, I'm excited.

Now it's Bella's turn to be nervous. She's met my parents and as expected, they loved her. They came for a visit only a couple of months after she and I got back together. My girl handled meeting them with confidence and grace. I'm sure it helped that she spoke to

my mother over the phone a few times before they actually met.

Now that Kate's on her way, Bella's a basket case. "Baby, calm down. You've already met her once, remember." She's changed her outfit three times and is now working on her famous Red Velvet cake.

It's odd, but funny to see my spitfire actually show some anxiousness. Still, I know there's no reason for her to worry and I want her to relax.

"I know, City, but it wasn't under the best circumstances and neither of us made the best impression. She's ya best friend and the most important person in ya life, next to your parents."

I take her face in my hands. "And you. She's the most important person in my life other than my parents and you." The lines between her brows smooth as the tension leaves. I lean down to give her a soft kiss. "I love you and Kate knows this. And believe me; she's going to love you. How could anyone not?"

I kiss her again and start to deepen it when she pulls away. "Hey! Bring those lips back here."

She giggles. "Later, City. I really do need to finish this. Thank ya. I'm better now."

She goes back to baking while I head into the living room to watch some TV. I offered to pick Kate and Tanya up at the airport, but they refused, saying they were renting a car.

Bella is just having a seat next to me, after finishing up in the kitchen, when we hear the car doors.

I take Bella's hand in mine as we open the front door to see Kate and Tanya making their way up the steps and onto the porch. "Edward, I missed you so much!" Bella backs away slightly as Kate runs and jumps in my arms. She's almost as small as my spitfire, but still nearly knocks me on my ass.

"I missed you too. I'm so glad you could make it." I let her go and reach for Bella's hand, pulling her back to my side. Kate grabs Tanya and pulls her forward. "Kate, Tanya, this is my Bella. Baby, this is Kate and her partner Tanya."

Bella puts her hand out. "Nice to meet ya â€| again." Kate ignores her hand and grabs her in a hug.

"I'm so sorry that I fucked things up last time we met. I felt just awful once I realizedâ€"

Bella cuts her off. "Please, don't even think about it again." She leans close to Kate and whispers loud enough for us all to hear. "It was his fault anyway."

Kate lets out one of her loud laughs and I know immediately that she's going to have a blast with Bella. "Oh, I'm really going to like you. Anyone that can have that man running around like he was that day and doesn't mind putting him in his place is an automatic friend of mine."

"Yeah, yeah. You two can kiss my ass. Come on Tanya. You're definitely my favorite person tonight." I put my arm around her and we all head inside.

The night goes really great, and as expected Bella, Kate and Tanya get along famously. If anything, I'm the odd man out â€| literally.

At the end of the night, Kate asks to speak to me while Bella shows Tanya to their room. I lead her out to the back deck.

We grab a seat in the porch swing, me with a beer and her with a glass of wine. "This is really nice, Edward. I thought you were crazy for moving here, but seeing you with Bella and how happy you are, it's clear this was the right move for you."

"It was. I can't even explain it, but I feel more comfortable here in six months than I've ever felt anywhere. Of course, I miss you and Tanya and my parents."

"Maybe Tanya and I will visit more. Especially after we have our baby. This is the perfect place for children."

I freeze, halting the swing. "Your baby?"

Looking over at her, she has a bigger smile on her face than I've seen in a long time. "Yep. We found another donor, and we're going forward."

I lean over, hugging her tightly. "I'm so fucking glad. No one deserves this more. So give me all the details."

She goes on to tell me that Tanya asked her brother, Eleazar. Initially, they didn't think to ask him because I was willing and seemed like the right choice. After I had fallen through, they decided to ask him. He already has three children with his wife, Carmen. Everyone discussed it, and after thinking it over, he and Carmen agreed.

"Even though I was looking forward to a red-headed baby, this is actually perfect because now the baby will have the closest thing to Tanya's DNA."

"I'm really happy for you both. I can't wait to meet your little one, and of course, you're welcome anytime. You know you always have a place with me." Then I smooth my hands over my hair. "Seriously, though, I'm not a fucking red-head."

Bella and Tanya find us laughing. I let Bella in on the news and congratulate Tanya before we finally all call it a night and head to bed.

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The next six month's fly by and before I know it, it's been a year since I moved here.

Kate called Bella and me last week to announce they were finally



pregnant. It took two rounds of Invitro, but they found out the second round took.

My work is great. Everyone has taken to me and I'm currently thinking of expanding the practice.

As for Bella â€| Well, tonight I'm asking her to marry me.

I spoke with Charlie privately the other day, hoping to convince him to consider living with us, knowing Bella would never want to leave her dad alone. He was happy and actually relieved that I was asking her. He confided that he had planned on talking to Bella about Sue moving in so this would work perfectly.

Shaking my hand, he made me promise always to give her the life she deserves. I readily agreed and plan to live up to that promise forever.

Who would have known all it would take is a deer to change my life completely ?

When I first crashed my car and ended up stranded in a little nowhere town, I thought it was just another piece of shitty luck in the life of Edward Cullen. If someone had told me then it would be the answer to everything, I would've laughed in their fucking face.

Now, I'm convinced ending up here, finally finding my place, was destiny.

Thanks to that deer, I'm exactly where I was always meant to be.

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><p><strong>Fran beta'd, and Judyblue, 2browneyes and Vampiregirl93 pre-read. <strong>

\*\*Please feel free to leave words of love and encouragement for Meli in your review. I know we all want to send her our thoughts and prayers and let her know we're thinking of her.\*\*

End  
file.